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Rochester, NY – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) today joined representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and local employers who rely on the Port of Rochester to announce that public and private funding will be used to dredge the Port making it accessible once again to ships and barges bringing in raw materials relied upon by area businesses.

The funding will come from a one-time pilot program which was set in motion when Slaughter brought together stakeholders from the businesses that mostly rely on the Port and assistance from federal, state and local government.

"The situation has reached a crisis point," said Slaughter. "If the channel isn't dredged this spring, companies like Essroc who rely on the Port may not be able to get a small barge up to the basin and that costs them business. Both the environmental and economic impact of such a situation would be dire. This channel is Rochester's gateway to greater seaways and vitally important to local employers."

"Given current national priorities and limited availability of funds to conduct dredging, Rochester Harbor did not receive funds in Fiscal Year 2012 or in the proposed President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2013," said Buffalo District Commander Lt. Col. Stephen H. Bales. "While Rochester Harbor is categorized as a low-use harbor given it transits less than 1 million tons per year, the Corps is working with Essroc Italcementi and other Rochester Harbor users to explore the potential for dredging the federal channel at non-federal expense. The Corps has a pilot program to provide support activities which may include surveying and dredging quantity determinations, permitting and engineering assistance."

As recently as 2008, Slaughter secured almost \$1.5 million that allowed the Port of Rochester to be dredged. Seeing that federal funding would not be available as it has been in past years, Slaughter brought together the necessary players to work in partnership on the pilot program announced today. Previously, the Rochester Harbor Channel was dredged in 2004 using funding secured by Slaughter in the FY04 federal budget.

The Port of Rochester was last dredged in 2009 and since then more than 244,000 cubic yards of sediment have accumulated along the harbor making it nearly impossible for many ships to navigate the waterway. The process of dredging, or removing the built up sediment along the coast will allow the Port, one of Rochester's greatest geographic advantages, to be once again fully operational.

Each year \$2 million worth of goods come into Rochester through the Port. Since 2008, 97,000 tons of material has been shipped or received through the Rochester Harbor.

Working with Business

One of the most frequent users of the Port is cement manufacturer Essroc Italcementi Group which has been using the Port of Rochester since 1958 to ship in cement used in the construction of many of Rochester's most recognizable buildings including the University of Rochester Inter-denominational Chapel, Chase Lincoln Tower, Monroe County Correctional Facility, Rochester Science Museum Planetarium Building and Kenneth B. Keating Federal Building.

Because it's become increasingly difficult for cement-bearing barges used by Essroc to get into the Port, they've been forced to ship less cement into Rochester by water, instead trucking cement from Canada at greater expense while adding additional traffic, potentially thousands of tractor trailers, across Western New York.

"Our customers depend on the efficient supply of cement in Rochester and that depends on the marine transportation," said Captain Stephen Murch, Senior Manager Marine Logistics at Essroc Italcementi Group. "We are at risk of losing that capacity, permanently, if maintenance dredging is not completed this year and in the future. Existing federal funds should be released from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and failure to do so adds cost, lowers reliability and puts many more heavy trucks on the public roads."

Every business that relies on Essroc's cement is affected including SentrySafe, the world's leading producer of fire and water safes which has been in Rochester for 82 years. Each day, their 500 employees rely on two to three truckloads of cement from Essroc. The high quality manufacturing that SentrySafe provides, demands high quality cement product that only Essroc can provide. Consistent, reliable supply of this special grade of cement is crucial to SentrySafe's Global Manufacturing Headquarters located in Rochester, NY. SentrySafe manufactures products that reach customers in over 50 countries.

"SentrySafe is proud to manufacture in Rochester, NY for over 80 years. There have been obstacles over the years, but we've been smart about how we've built and grown our business. Challenges like these make it difficult to remain competitive with other companies sourcing products from overseas. That is why the work Congresswoman Slaughter is doing is so important," said Steve Barry, Vice President of Operations at SentrySafe.

Working with Government

Slaughter brought together representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation and State during the earliest stages of the pilot program. Slaughter's introduction between the businesses and permitting agencies was critical in developing the partnerships that ensured Essroc's Permit Application to dredge became a reality.

"Continued maintenance of navigational water bodies support both commercial activities and recreational access to New York's abundant water resources," NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens said. "On the Genesee River DEC has worked cooperatively with Essroc and marina owners to review the permit applications for maintenance dredging. We will continue to work with our federal, state and local partners so this project can move forward expeditiously and in an environmentally protective manner."

Fighting for Long-Term Funding in Washington

Slaughter has been a long-time advocate for a consistent funding that would allow national harbors, like the Port of Rochester to be adequately maintained.

She is a co-sponsor of the Realizing America's Maritime Promise (RAMP) Act, legislation that would no longer allow Congress to raid the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which collects over a billion dollars annually from the shippers who use our harbors, and direct that revenue towards the operations and maintenance costs of federal harbors like the Port of Rochester. Every year, Congress spends less than half of this revenue on maintenance instead electing to use this funding for other national programs.

In December, she led a bipartisan letter with 20 fellow House members, House Transportation Committee Chairman John Mica and Ranking Member Nick Rahall urging them to send the RAMP Act to the House floor for a vote.

Slaughter believes that Congress needs to go further to specifically support low-use harbors, like Rochester. Low-use harbor are those harbors that transport less than one million tons of cargo per year. Today Slaughter announced that she is co-sponsoring the Harbor Fairness Act, which requires Congress to allocate 40 percent of Harbor Maintenance Tax Revenues to spend on operations and maintenance for smaller harbors like the Port of Rochester. This week, Slaughter wrote to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Budget Committee urging them to apportion all proceeds of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to the fund's intended purpose—maintenance dredging.

Presently, the Corps spends 99 percent of its operations and maintenance budget for large harbors and less than one percent for harbors like the Port of Rochester.

More on Slaughter's work on behalf of the nation's ports is available [here](#).